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A NEW ALOE FROM ETHIOPIA

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(With Plates I and II.)

Aloe schelpei Reynolds. Species nova, affinis *A. megalacanthae* Bak., caulibus brevioribus decumbentibus, foliis et dentibus minoribus, inflorescentia brevior 1-ramosa, floribus angustioribus differt.

Planta caulibus decumbentibus usque 50 cm. longis, 5—6 cm. diam. *Folia* 16—20, dense rosulata, lanceolato-attenuata, saepe 45 cm. longa, 10—12 cm. lata, patula et recurvula; supra glauca, interdum maculata, basi levissime concava, superne canaliculata; subtus convexa; marginibus dentibus rubris 2—3 mm. longis, 15 mm. distantibus munita.

Inflorescentia simplex vel 1-ramosa, saepe 50 cm. alta. *Racemi* subdensi, 6—9 cm. longi, 6—7 cm. diametro. *Bractae* ovato-acutae, 5 mm. longae, 3 mm. latae, scariosae, 3—5-nervatae.

Pedicelli 13—15 mm. longi. *Perianthium* aurantiacum, cylindrico-trigonum, 28—30 mm. longum, brevissime stipitatum; *segmenta exteriora* per 12 mm. libera, 3-nervata. *Antherae* 2—3 mm. exsertae. *Stigma* demum 3—4 mm. exserta. *Ovarium* viridulum, 6 mm. longum, 3 mm. diametro. (Plates I—II)

HABITAT: Ethiopia, Shoa Prov., Boli Gorge, Mulu Sayu, alt. 7,000 ft., 13 Sept. 1952, Curle et Schelpe 61, holotype (BM); ex Mulu Sayu, cult. Greendale, Salisbury, S. Rhodesia, fl. 10 April 1960, L. C. Leach 9838 (PRE, K).

Our new species is named after Dr. E. A. Schelpe (Dept. of Botany, University of Cape Town), who discovered it in September 1952, on steep grassland slopes of the Boli Gorge, Mulu Sayu, Shoa Province, Ethiopia.

Mulu Sayu is the name of Brigadier D. A. Sandford's farm, lying to the west of the road to the Blue Nile and Debra Marcos, 54 km. north of Addis Ababa.

In May 1956 I visited Mulu Sayu expressly to investigate this species, and found large numbers of plants on steep north-east slopes of the Boli Gorge, facing the 700-ft. waterfall of the Mugur River (a tributary of the Blue Nile), at c. 9° 14' N., 38° 40' E., and at an altitude of 7,700 ft. Unfortunately no plants were then in flower, but a description of the available material was prepared. Dry spikes lying about were consistently simple or only 1-branched, and averaged 50 cm. in height.

Three large plants brought back to Johannesburg have shown no sign of flowering in five years, but a plant given to Mr. L. C. Leach, and cultivated by him at Greendale (near Salisbury, S. Rhodesia), flowered there in April 1960. After examining Dr. Schelpe's material in the British Museum, and the flowers of Mr. Leach's specimen, the description can now be completed.

A. schelpei appears to be nearest allied to the Somaliland species *A. megalacantha* Bak. from which it differs chiefly in having much shorter decumbent stems, smaller rosettes and leaves, an inflorescence only 50 cm. in height which is simple or only 1-branched.

The cylindric-conic racemes of *A. schelpei* with the youngest buds spreading horizontally to slightly downwards suggests an affinity with *A. elegans* Tod., but the latter is acaulescent, is not of shrubby growth and has a much taller, very much more branched inflorescence.

DESCRIPTION: *Plant* of low shrubby growth with decumbent stems that are short or up to 50 cm. long, 5—6 cm. thick, with shoots from base or at random along the stem, forming dense groups.

Leaves 16—20, rosulate, lanceolate-attenuate, averaging 45 cm. long, 10—12 cm. broad at base, the youngest erectly spreading, the oldest spreading and recurved; *upper surface* glaucous with bluish tinge, unicoloured or sometimes with several pale green to creamy lenticular spots near base, slightly concave at base, rather deeply canaliculate upwards; *lower surface* rounded, slightly deeper green than upper surface, usually with several spots in lowest quarter; *margins* with prominent reddish pink edge armed with teeth of the same colour at base, paler at apex, firm to subpungent, 2—3 mm. long, about 15 mm. apart. *Sap* dries dark brown.

Inflorescence consistently simple or 1-branched, averaging 50 cm. high, with the peduncle basally plano-convex and 16—18 mm. broad.

Raceme cylindric-conic, 6—9 cm. long, 6—7 cm. diam., rather densely flowered, the youngest buds spreading horizontally to slightly downwards, open flowers nutant to subpendulous.

Bracts ovate-acute, thin, dry, dirty white, 5 mm. long, 3 mm. broad, 3—5-nerved.

Pedicels pink, slender, the lowest 13—15 mm. long.

Perianth orange-red, paler at mouth, 28—30 mm. long, cylindric-trigonous, 7 mm. diam. across the ovary, very slightly narrowed above the ovary on the underside, thence very slightly curved and enlarging trigonously towards the throat and slightly compressed laterally; *outer segments* free for 12 mm., paler and thinner at the margin, 3-nerved, the apices subacute and slightly spreading; *inner segments* broader than the outer and with 3 crowded nerves forming an orange-red keel, the apices brownish and more obtuse than the outer.

Filaments pale yellow, the 3 inner narrower and lengthening before the 3 outer.

Anthers brown, in turn exserted 2—3 mm.

Style greenish yellow, with the *stigma* at length exserted 3—4 mm.

Ovary yellowish green, 6 mm. long, 3 mm. diam.

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FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

PLATE I. *Aloe schelpei* Reynolds

FIG. 1.—Flowering plants photographed by Dr. E. A. Schelpe in September 1952, at Mulu Sayu, Boli Gorge, 54 km. north of Addis Ababa, Shoa Prov., Ethiopia. Height 60 cm.

FIG. 2.—Plants at the same locality, not flowering in May 1956, photographed by the author.



FIG. 1.

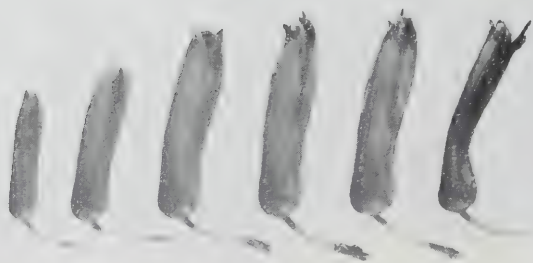


FIG. 2.

PLATE II. *Aloe schelpei* Reynolds.

FIG. 1.—Raceme $\times \frac{5}{16}$. (Photo: Mr. L. C. Leach.)

FIG. 2.—Flowers 1/1 from bud to post-pollination stage. (From spirit material prepared by Mr. L. C. Leach, Greendale, Salisbury, S. Rhodesia.)